

AN APPRAISAL OF THE FACTORS MILLITATING AGAINST THE PRACTICE OF SYSTEMATIC TRAINING BY CONSTRUCTION FIRMS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Systematic training is a planned, integrated purposeful and sequential training approach or procedure used by an organization to facilitate employees learning so that their resultant behaviors contribute to the attainment of the organization's goals and objectives. The study investigated the frequency of training programmes, organizations that meet firms training needs, funds reimbursement by the ITF to firms for training, the constraints and strategies that could be adopted to enhance the practice of systematic training by construction firms in the development of their workers. Data was generated through structured questionnaire and from existing records and analyzed using simple percentage and frequency counts. The study show that systematic training involves four basic inter-related steps viz: identification of needs, designing of training programmes, implementation of the training programmes and evaluation of training results. The study also revealed very poor participation of construction firms in the provision of training programmes for their workers, hence their inability to benefit from the training reimbursement funds by the ITF. Lack of funds and absence of staff development policies was identified as chief amongst factors discovered to be militating against the practice of systematic training. The study has also shown that the provision of adequate budgetary allocation for training and development is one of the strategies that could be adopted to enhance the practice of systematic training. The study has shown that systematic training does not only serve as an agent of change, but also a means of maintaining standards and ensuring that those who are newly engaged into existing jobs and practices are able to adapt quickly.

KEYWORDS: constraints, trainers, systematic training, strategies, practice, productivity.

INTRODUCTION

Systematic training is a planned, integrated purposeful and sequential training approach or procedure used by an organization to facilitate employees learning so that their resultant behaviors contribute to the attainment of the organization's goals and objectives. Systematic training involves four basic inter-related steps viz: identification of needs, designing of training programmes, implementation of the training programmes and evaluation of training results (Kunder, 1998).

Training and skills manpower development, in industry and commerce were not taken too seriously until the advent of the indigenization Decree of the early 1970s when the Federal Government identified some of the constraints to effective manpower training and development in the country. These include according to ITF (2002):

- Inadequate educational and professionally qualified personnel;
- Poor quality (low skilled) employees at technician and craft level etc.

In identifying these constrains, government observed that despite the difficulties often encountered by employers in finding qualified professionals to recruit, many establishments particularly in the private sector, place the lowest premium on skills training and thus employer training effort has been negligible (ITF, 2002).

This situation prompted government to evolve a comprehensive and well articulated manpower training scheme. It argued that there was the urgent need for a reduction in the reliance on expatriate personnel and that, through increased training efforts there would be adequate supply of high level manpower as well as technical skills to meet the needs of the economy as a whole, including the need of individuals, industrial and commercial companies (Osei, 2000).

Systematic training is concerned with identifying, preparing, designing, creating, evaluating and using facilities so as to secure training initiative and ultimate success. The trainer cannot however work in isolation and it may well be more appropriate to define training strategy as the art of motivating management towards using the facilities and skills the trainer can provide. Implicitly, to what extent a particular trainer can achieve a goal is dependent on a set of circumstances that have to do with the trainers' personal competence, position and influence within the organization and the level of cooperation of other staff. The trainers' effectiveness in meeting the organizational goals/objectives will also depend, according to ITF (2002) on:

- The power and influence the trainer has within the organization
- And how this affects his or her work behavior and
- Issues concerned with personal competence especially the core competencies that a trainer must have in order to be able to successfully carry out his or her job.

In addition to this, consideration has to be given to the issues of how well the trainer fits into the organization and the kind of strategies he or she should adopt. According to Armstrong (1991), the process of training consists of the following steps:

- (i) Identify needs – the analysis covers problems to be solved as well as future demands. Two points are usually considered at this stage; the best and most cost effective way to meet those training needs.
- (ii) Define learning requirements – it would be important at this stage to examine the skills and knowledge level that is required to be developed in order to meet the new objectives identified by the training needs.
- (iii) Planning training programmes – Training techniques and locations of training should be considered at this stage. They must also be designed to meet training needs and objectives and learning requirements.
- (iv) Techniques, facilities, locations and trainers – These factors are based on the training programmes being developed to meet the needs and objectives by using the correct combination of training techniques and locations. A decision as to who provides the training, from within or outside the organization, has to be made on the availability of suitable training, and the source of responsibility, i.e. training department or manager.
- (v) Implement the training – effective training methods must then be applied in order to allow trainees to gain the required skills, skills, knowledge and attitudes they need.
- (vi) Evaluate training – this step is considered to be of vital importance where trainee performance are monitored in order to find out if training objectives have been met. This process is shown in Figure 1.

Solomon, (2006) observed that in order to achieve the desired result, training should be done systematically. Systematic training enables smooth transition from a presently known state of affairs of an organization to that the organization envisages for the future. The objectives of this study are therefore:

- i. To examine the nature and frequency of systematic training in the constructions industry
- ii. To examine the activities of training organizations with regards to the construction industry.
- iii. To identify the constraints militating against the practice of systematic training in the construction industry.
- iv. To establish strategies that would enhance the practicing of systematic training approach in the development of workers in the construction industry.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted the survey and documentary analysis. The survey research design involves the gathering of data from existing record and seeking the opinion of workers through structured questionnaire. Documentary analysis involved the examination of existing record related to training activities in the firms.

The area covered by the study consist of Building construction firms (BF), Building/Civil Engineering firms (BCF), Civil Engineering firms (CEF) and firms engaged only in Construction Consultancy Services (CF) in Adamawa State, Bauchi State, Plateau State and Abuja. The population for the study comprised of the training officers, supervisors, training managers, personnel managers and workers in the construction firms. A total of 70 questionnaires were distributed equally amongst the selected construction firms in the study area. 58 firms responded by completing and returning the forms administered to them. Nine (9) of the questionnaires returned were from firms engaged in consultancy services while forty nine (49) are from building and civil engineering firms.

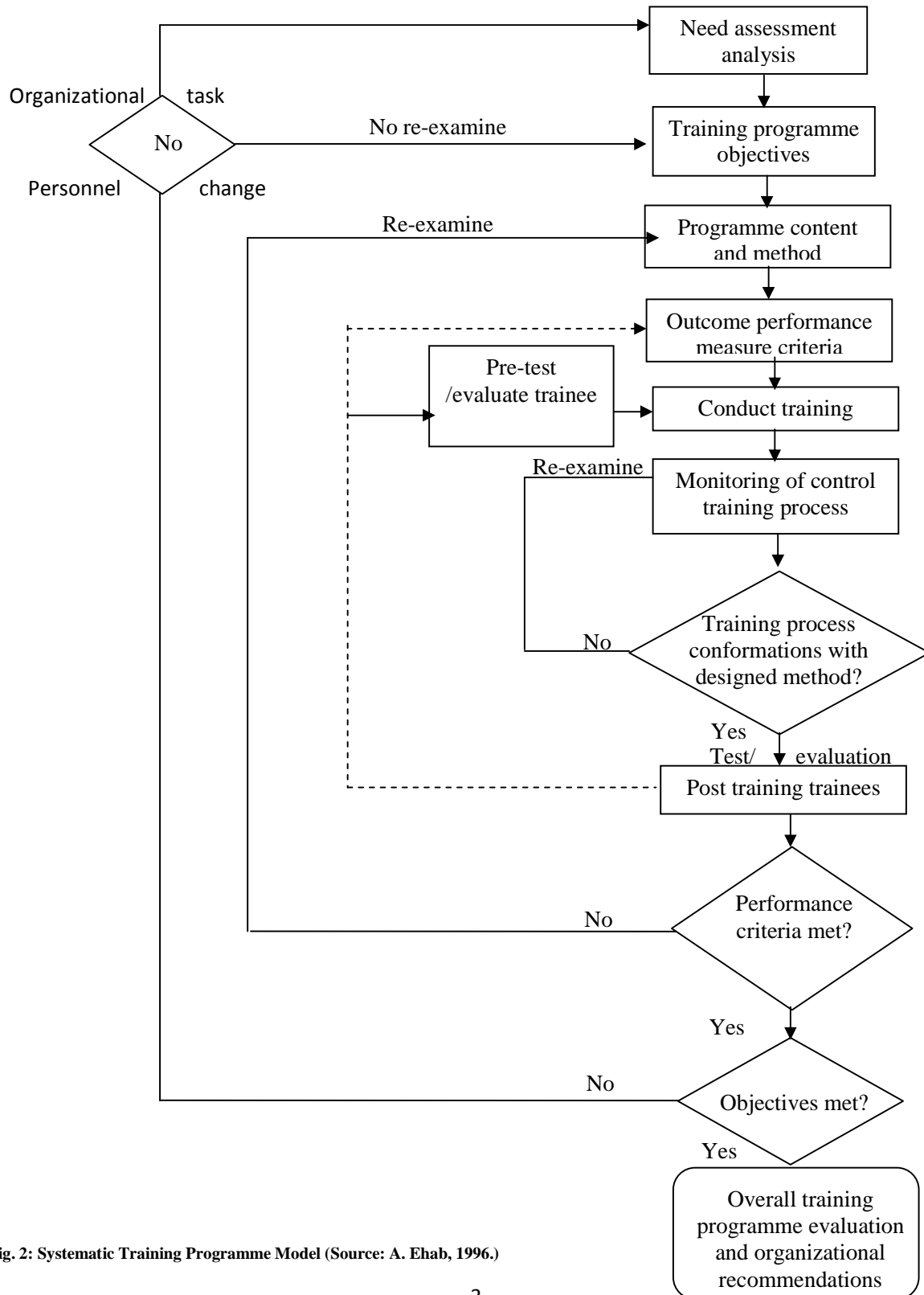


Fig. 2: Systematic Training Programme Model (Source: A. Ehab, 1996.)

The purposive or judgment sampling technique was used for the study. This ensured that only targeted subjects involved in construction were sampled. Information was sought regarding the frequency of training programmes,

organizations that meet firms training needs, funds reimbursement by the ITF to firms for training, constraints to training and the strategies that could be adopted to enhance the practice of systematic training approach in the development of construction workers. In analyzing the data generated from the study, simple percentages and frequency count were used. The mean statistics and standard deviation were also used in the analysis of questions relating to constraints and strategies required for smooth implementation of training policies.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

FREQUENCY OF TRAINING PROGRAM FOR WORKERS

Table 1 shows the response of training managers, trainers and supervisors regarding the frequency of training for the different categories of staff. Data reveal that 89.65% of the respondents agree that management training is only embarked on when needed, 10.35% indicate that training at this level was carried out yearly while a zero response was recorded for weekly, monthly and quarterly training at this level. The data also show that 2 of the respondents representing 3.45% agree that supervisory training is done yearly training at this level recorded a zero response. Similarly, 8.62% of respondent indicated that technical training was carried out by their firms yearly and 91.38% when needed. However, the result also shows that all respondents (58) agreed that clerical and other training not suggested was only carried out when needed.

Table 1 Frequency of Training Program for Workers

	No of response	Frequency of training									
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Management training	58	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	10.35	52	89.65
Supervisory Training	58	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3.45	56	96.55
Technical training	58	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	8.62	53	91.38
Operatives/semi skilled	58	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	58	100
Clerical	58	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	58	100
Others	58	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	58	100

No. = Number of workers trained

DISTRIBUTION TREND OF TRAINING ORGANIZATIONS THAT MEET FIRMS' TRAINING NEEDS.

Table 2 shows that a higher number of the training needs of the firms were met by training organization other than the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) and the Centre for Management Development (CMD), except for training at the level of the Operative/Semi skilled workers with ITF providing 24.49% of the firms training needs. This result is an indication that majority of the firms in the study area did not benefit from the services of the ITF, CMD and ASCON in the area of the training for their workers.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Training Organization that meets Firms' Training Needs

Training type	Respondent	ITF		ASCON		CMD		Other	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Management training	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	100
Supervisory Training	38	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	100
Technical training	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	100
Operatives/semi skilled	49	12	24.49	-	-	-	-	37	75.51
Clerical workers	27	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
Others	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100

ITF = Industrial training fund, ASCON = Administrative Staff College of Nigeria, MD = Center for Management Development.

TRAINING REIMBURSEMENT TO CONSTRUCTION FIRMS BY THE ITF

Information in Table 3 shows that between 2002 and 2006 in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, only three firms i.e. Impresit Bakalori, Bouygues Nigeria Limited and Julius Berger PLC benefited from training reimbursement from the Industrial Training Fund. Furthermore, the data show that no construction firm benefited from the training reimbursement fund from Adamawa, Bauchi, and Plateau states. This result further buttress the low participation of construction firms in the training of their staff.

TABLE 3: ITF INDUSTRIAL TRAINING REIMBURSEMENT BETWEEN 1998-2006

	ABUJA	ADAMAWA	BAUCHI	PLATEAU
1998	1. IMPRESIT BAKALORI	-	-	-
1999	1. IMPRESIT BAKALORI 2. BOUYUES NIG. LTD.	-	-	-
2000	1. IMPRESIT BAKALORI 2. BOUYUES NIG. LTD.	-	-	-
2001	1. BOUYUES NIG. LTD.	-	-	-
2002	1. BOUYUES NIG. LTD.	-	-	-
2003	1. BOUYUES NIG. LTD.	-	-	-
2004	1. SALINI NIG. LTD. 2. BOUYUES NIG. LTD.	-	-	-
2005	1. JULIUS BERGER PLC 2. BOUYUES NIG. LTD.	-	-	-
2006	1. BOUYUES NIG. LTD.	-	-	-

SOURCE: ITF HEADQUARTERS JOS

CONSTRAINTS MILITATING AGAINST THE PRACTICE OF SYSTEMATIC APPROACH IN THE TRAINING OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Table 4 shows the overall mean responses for trainers, training managers and supervisors on the constraints militating against the practice of systematic approach to the training of construction workers in the area under study. The data show that the respondents accepted the lack of fund and absence of staff development policy with combined mean score of $\bar{x} = 4.42$ each, the absence of knowledge of training function $\bar{x} = 4.2$, the procedure for systematic training too cumbersome $\bar{x} = 4.2$, lack of foresight and lack of sensitivity $\bar{x} = 4.23$, negative attitude of management $\bar{x} = 4.02$, lack of cooperation by managers $\bar{x} = 4.82$ item vii, item x and xii with $\bar{x} = 3.25$, $\bar{x} = 2.54$ and 2.91 respectively were read by the participants as moderate constraints militating against the practice of systematic training in their respective

firms. However the respondents also rated lack of available time for training $\bar{x} = 2.91$ and frequent disputes $\bar{x} = 2.21$ as low constraints.

TABLE 4: Respondents Mean Scores on the Constraints Militating Against the Practice of Systematic Training.

Constraints militating against the practice of systematic training	(TR) No. = 15		TM No. = 11		(SU) No. = 32		COMBIED MEAN	REMARK
	Mea	SD	Mea	SD	Mea	SD		
Negative attitude of management	4.06	1.07	3.97	1.20	4.03	0.98	4.02	H
Lack of foresight	4.27	0.98	4.17	1.09	4.26	0.98	4.23	H
Lack of sensitivity	4.29	1.02	4.33	0.89	4.07	2.27	4.23	H
The procedure for systematic training too cumbersome	4.29	0.87	4.25	0.94	4.26	0.95	4.26	H
No training/ staff development policy	4.37	0.91	4.48	0.60	4.40	0.75	4.42	H
Lack of fund (no budgetary provision)	4.34	0.92	4.47	0.60	4.45	0.67	4.42	H
Lack of qualified staff	4.05	1.03	3.79	1.31	1.90	1.17	3.25	M
Lack of cooperation by managers	4.86	1.49	4.29	0.88	4.31	0.92	3.82	H
Absence of knowledge of training function	4.33	0.92	4.23	0.94	4.28	0.91	4.28	H
Changes in social situation	2.73	1.84	2.46	1.41	2.42	1.43	2.54	M
Frequent disputes	2.22	1.31	3.19	1.18	2.23	1.29	2.21	LC
Lack of available time for training	3.74	1.37	2.51	1.52	2.48	1.82	2.91	M
Expected financial benefits of training not known	2.01	1.22	2.65	1.41	2.28	1.49	2.31	LC

TR= Trainers. TM = Training Managers, SU=Supervisor, SD= Standard Deviation, H= Higher constraints, M= Moderate, LC= Low constraints L= Lowest constraints.

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE THE PRACTICE OF SYSTEMATIC TRAINING BY FIRMS, GOVERNMENTS AGENCIES FOR TRAINING, TRAINING MANAGERS AND TRAINERS

Table 5 reveal that Trainers, Training Managers and Supervisors all strong agree to all the items asked in (a-h) and (a-c) respectively for the firms and trainers as being strategies that could enhance the practice of systematic training in the construction firms. Firms giving positive support to training and cooperating with training personnel had a combined mean $\bar{x} = 4.93$

Similarly, the data reveal that trainers, training managers and supervisors all strongly agree with all the suggested strategies except one requiring government agencies to provide training facilities for training of workers in the construction industry which was rated as agreed with a combined $\bar{x} = 4.40$. similarly, the respondents moderately agreed with a combined $\bar{x} = 2.58$ in the area requiring the government to fund the training of trainers.

Table 5: Respondents Mean Score on the Strategies that would enhance the Practice of Systematic Training

	(TR) No. = 15		TM No. = 11		(SU) No. = 32		COMBINED MEAN	REMARK
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Firms should have well articulated training policy	4.68	0.72	4.71	0.73	4.68	0.89	4.69	SA
Firms should employ full time training specialist or officers with the responsibility	4.59	0.77	4.56	0.87	4.61	0.73	4.59	SA
Firms should have adequate budgetary provision for training and development	4.77	0.67	4.77	0.68	4.74	0.74	4.76	SA
Firms should provide facilities for training	4.76	0.67	4.75	0.68	4.74	0.72	4.75	SA
Firms should positively support training and cooperate with training personnel	4.97	0.10	4.92	0.53	4.89	0.43	4.93	SA
Firms should properly integrate training function into the firms organization policy and procedure	4.84	0.44	4.84	0.44	4.84	0.44	4.84	SA
Firms should accept training implicitly or explicitly as fulfilling the organizations policy	4.84	0.40	4.84	0.44	4.85	0.40	4.84	SA
Firms should see training as an integral component of management action which not only develops resources of individual but help the firm to adapt to changing conditions	4.84	0.44	4.84	0.44	4.84	0.44	4.84	SA

(i) Firms

Government agencies for training must generate greater awareness of the strategies firms	4.79	0.55	4.81	0.46	4.51	0.46	4.70	SA
Providing training equipment and facilities	4.41	0.90	4.40	0.87	4.59	0.78	4.57	A
Appraise facilities provided for training by employers	4.54	0.94	4.57	0.87	4.59	0.78	2.58	M
Fund the training of trainers	2.60	0.77	2.56	0.87	2.59	0.78	2.58	M
Conduct or assist others to conduct research into all matters relating to systematic training in the industry	4.60	0.77	4.49	0.40	4.88	0.46	4.83	SA
Encourage greater relationship between the	4.91	0.23	4.69	0.40	4.88	0.46	4.83	SA

industry and the training agencies								
Train more relationship between the industry and the training agencies	4.56	0.59	4.56	0.60	4.56	0.59	4.56	SA
Entrench in organizations a permanent programme for facilities	4.56	0.59	4.56	0.60	4.56	0.59	4.56	SA
Get the generality of people in the industry to be aware of the impact of human resource training and development.	4.60	0.77	4.56	0.87	4.59	0.78	4.58	SA

(ii) The Government Agencies for Training

The managers should promote and encourage positive attitude to training	4.79	0.77	4.56	0.87	4.598	0.78	4.65	SA
Related more closely with the training agencies in order to identify and fulfill training needs of their organization	4.57	0.55	4.57	0.56	4.57	0.56	4.57	SA
Cooperate with training specialist, supervisors and personnel officers for he identification of training	4.60	0.77	4.56	0.87	4.59	0.78	4.58	SA
Training mangers should regard systematic training as an integral part of the company development policy	4.76	0.76	4.77	0.54	4.59	0.78	4.71	SA

(iii) The Training Managers

(iv) The Trainers

Trainers must be conversant and knowledgeable on how to identify what training is needed	4.84	0.32	4.84	0.32	4.84	0.33	4.84	SA
Who to plan appropriate program to meet the needs	4.84	0.32	4.84	0.32	4.82	0.31	4.83	SA
How to evaluate the effectiveness and satisfy any residual training requirement	4.83	0.36	4.84	0.35	4.83	0.36	4.83	SA

TR= Trainers. TM = Training Mangers, SU=Supervisor, SD= Standard Deviation, SA= strongly agree, M= Moderately and A = Agreed

CONCLUSIONS

Results from the study show that there are less concerted efforts by the construction industry, training organizations as well as the government in stressing the importance of good training practices. Training has been considered in this study as one the ways to maintain the smooth operation of the firms; it plays a part by ensuring that workers have the required knowledge, attitude and skills to carry out efficiently and effectively their tasks under existing

system of operations. However, while systematic training procedures when rightly established have many advantages in the process of organization development over earlier forms of training, they also have their disadvantage and difficulties. In the first place they involve an additional outlay of expenditure. More people, space, equipment and facilities are required for instruction. The study has found out that further difficulties may arise from the choice of unsuitable instruction and from the attitude of older workers.

The attitude of the managers to training is seen as a great constraint to systematic training. This study feels that this attitude almost always undermines a training scheme. Line management/training conflicts occur even in relatively well-organized firms. They may also easily spring from a clash of personalities. But in most cases they arise from a basic lack of understanding of the function of training in organization.

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